



State of Illinois
JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Department of Transportation
Omer Osman, Secretary

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Winter storm featuring snow, high winds and bitter cold to make travel treacherous

IDOT, ISP urge public to avoid unnecessary travel

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation and Illinois State Police announced Wednesday that a major winter storm is expected to create dangerous travel conditions across the state Thursday and Friday, strongly urging the public to adjust plans and postpone unnecessary trips. The mixture of snow, rapidly falling temperatures and strong wind gusts is expected to produce blizzard conditions by Thursday afternoon, with extremely slick roads, little to no visibility and potentially life-threatening wind chills if you become stranded.

“The Illinois Department of Transportation is prepared to use all available resources to respond to this significant winter storm, but travel at times will be treacherous if not impossible by midday Thursday and into the overnight hours,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. “Prepare now and consider postponing plans if they require driving. Remember: the safest option always is to stay home. Our IDOT snow-and-ice team will be out in force, but your help and patience will be key to ensuring the safety of everyone.”

The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning beginning Thursday through Friday, with snow followed by temperatures plummeting in the afternoon, resulting in ice-covered roads with winds reaching as high as 50 mph creating whiteout conditions. In southern Illinois, travel is expected to be further challenged by rain in the morning freezing over during the day.

Snow accumulations are expected to range between 1 and 5 inches, with higher totals in the northern half of the state and the Chicago area. However, due to subzero temperatures, the effectiveness of salt and materials to treat roads will be substantially diminished. Additionally, blowing and drifting snow will quickly deteriorate conditions on roads that have just been treated and plowed.

“With a vast majority of the state anticipated to be impacted by severe winter weather conditions during one of the busiest travel periods of the year, the ISP is cautioning drivers to prepare your vehicle if you plan to travel in the inclement weather,” said ISP Director Brendan Kelly. “Further, it is imperative that drivers remain focused on the roads and the potential for icy conditions, especially when approaching any vehicles parked or stranded on the side of the road and those emergency personnel helping them. We want everyone to make it home for the holidays.”

If your trip is absolutely necessary, anticipate slippery conditions at all times and much longer travel times. Prepare for the worst if you get stranded, following some critical steps:

- Make sure someone is aware of your route and schedule.
- Make sure your gas tank is full.
- Keep a cell phone and charged battery, warm clothes, blankets, food, water, a first-aid kit, traction materials, washer fluid and an ice scraper in your vehicle.
- Reminder: Using handheld phones while driving is illegal in Illinois, unless it is an emergency.
- If you are involved in a crash or your vehicle breaks down, remain inside your vehicle, which is your safest form of shelter. Exiting your vehicle into live traffic can have fatal consequences.
- Always wear a seat belt, whether you’re sitting in the front seat or back seat. It’s the law and your best defense if you’re in a crash.
- Take it SLOW, especially when approaching intersections and ramps that are prone to icing.

“We’re working closely with local emergency management officials throughout the state to monitor conditions and be ready to provide assistance they may need,” said IEMA Deputy Director Scott Swinford. “But it’s also important that people prepare themselves for this storm with food, water, working flashlights, weather radios and other necessities.”

Statewide, IDOT has available more than 1,800 trucks and equipment to treat roads and respond to weather emergencies. Snow-and-ice removal operations will likely continue into the weekend. If you encounter a plow during your travels, slow down, increase your driving distance and please don’t crowd the plow.

For regular updates on statewide road conditions, visit www.gettingaroundillinois.com. You also can follow IDOT on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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